Lesson Note – Group Presentations

Introduction

Group presentations are common in school, especially for big projects. Why? Because in the real world, you often give presentations in groups. Your teachers will make you give group presentations to train your teamwork skills.

Why does the workplace make you give presentation in groups? Because in the real world, everyone is an expert on different things. If different experts can work well together, they can create something much better than any one person can make alone.

Now that you understand why group presentations are important, let's talk about do's and don'ts for group presentations.

Common Mistakes in Group Presentations

Imagine your teacher just put you into a group and told you to go do a group presentation in 1 week. What usually happens?

A lot of times, students will meet and in that first meeting, they decide who does which part. So maybe Bob does part 1, Jerry does part 2, and Jane does part 3. Then each person goes off to do their part, and they maybe meet again before the due date to put everything together. Maybe Bob didn't do a good job with his part, and then Jerry and Jane get upset and stressed, and they try to fix it last minute. Or they don't even check Bob's part, and then the group gets a bad mark, which makes Jerry and Jane upset at Bob.

Ok, so that group experience is pretty common, and there's three big mistakes they made.

Mistake 1: Forgetting to Make a Team Agreement

Remember: No one can read your mind. You have to know what you want, and you have to tell your team.

Solution: Make the Team Agreement in the first meeting
In your first meeting, you can talk to your team about common issues like
1. What is the team goal? (e.g., what grade do you want as a team?)
2. How will you communicate with each other? (e.g., WeChat?)
3. How often will you meet up and update each other? (e.g., daily? Every 3 days?)
4. What is each person's responsibility?

Mistake 2: Not Checking Up on Each Other

Jerry and Jane got upset at Bob because Bob didn't do his work properly and didn't tell the group until the day before the presentation. Sure, Jerry and Jane can be upset at Bob for being irresponsible. But Jerry and Jane also were irresponsible because they didn't check up on each other earlier.

Remember, in a team, you need to support each other. You shouldn't just think, "*OK I'm going to do my part and my team members should do their part. And then we should be good.*" That's not teamwork.

Solution: Update each other regularly.
If you have 1 week to do your group project, you should probably meet 3 times. If you have 1 month to do a group project, you should meet weekly. Don't wait until the end.

If you meet regularly and you find out a team member isn't committed or isn't responsible, then you can talk to the teacher about it. In the real world, you would talk to your manager or team leader about it. When you let the teacher know early, they can help you. If you wait until the very end, it's too late. There's nothing anyone can do.

Mistake 3: Lack of Integration

Integration means combining separate parts into one whole part. In group projects, each person has a different responsibility. As a group, you need to come together and integrate your different parts into one whole part. It's like putting together lego. The pieces don't just fit together right away. You have to do the work to fit the pieces together.

It's very obvious and painful to watch when a group clearly did not integrate their parts. It sounds like each person is giving a separate presentation, and their content doesn't even fit with each other. Also, their PPT looks like there's 3 separate PPTs, one done by each person. That shows bad teamwork.

Solution: You should be trying to integrate your work with each other in every meeting.
In the first meeting, you make the plan about what each person will do. In future meetings, you report your progress to each other and decide if anything needs to change in the original plan. By the final meeting, you should be checking that each person's part fits well into the big picture.

You should also make sure that every person's slides have the same formatting so that it looks like the PPT was done by 1 person, not separate people.

Sometimes, students complain that their partner's part wasn't good and they should lose marks for that. But in group projects, you are responsible for the group result. You have plenty of time to check each other's work and improve on each other's work. Make sure you use that time wisely and not wait until the last minute.

Good things to do for Group Presentations

Now that we covered the 3 big mistakes for group presentations and their solutions, let's talk about some good things to do during group presentations:

1: Introduce your team members at the beginning and who will speak about what

The first person to present should go over the agenda and mention who will talk about which topic.

2: Each group member should introduce the next person

When you finish your part, you should say, "Next, please welcome [NAME] to talk about [TOPIC]."

3: Have one person be in charge of controlling the PPT. That person needs to know when to go to the next slide.

It's very awkward to watch when a presenter says, "Next slide please" and then the person in charge of the PPT is slow to change the slide. During your rehearsal, make sure you tell the person in charge of the PPT when you want the slide to change.

4: Be interested in your partner's part of the presentation

After you finish your part, remember that the audience is still watching you! If you look bored or uninterested in what your partners are saying, you will leave a very bad impression on the audience.

5: Use "we" not "I"

During a group presentation, students often say "I think" or "In my opinion". But remember that this is a group presentation, so you should say "Our group thinks" or "In our opinion".

6: Have a leader in charge of the Q&A period

During the Q&A period, it's awkward when no one from the group wants to answer the question. Pick a person to be the **question moderator**. That person will assign a group member to answer each question. For example, that moderator can say, "*OK your question is about XYZ. Jerry on our team knows XYZ best, so he will answer your question.*"

Check Your Understanding Questions

1. Why are group presentations important in the real world?
2. What are some examples of team rules to set in the first meeting?
3. How frequently should you update your team if your group project is 1 week long?
4. What are some signs that a team didn't integrate their work?
5. Give three examples of good things to do for group presentations.